(c) if not, whether Government propose to increase staff in branches where work of investment schemes has considerably increased and investors have to wait for long hours to receive their interest etc.; and

(d) if not, in what manner Government propose to tackle the problem of delays being faced by investors, particularly senior citizens?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) Yes, Sir. The Government has an action plan to computerize the working of all large Post Offices in metros and other big cities for improving efficiency.

(b) Providing computers to Post Offices located in cities is an on-going process and Post Offices having relatively high traffic and counter operations are being taken up for computerization in a phased manner depending upon the availability of funds and approval of the competent authority. At the end of Ninth Five Year Plan, 506 Head Post Offices and 1266 Sub Post Offices were provided with computers. By the end of the Tenth Five Year Plan (2006-07), all 845 Head Post Offices and 6861 large Sub Post Offices in the country are proposed to be fully computerized covering all metros and big cities.

(c) and (d) Do not arise in view of (a) and (b) above.

**Allocation of funds for rural telephones**

709. PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA:
DR. T SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Department of Telecommunication plans to provide telephone services in rural India which has hit a bump due to delay in releasing money to universal services obligation fund;

(b) if so, whether Department of Telecommunication had decided to operate Rs. 1000 crore for putting up village phones;

(c) if so, whether delay of releasing funds has delayed the project; and

(d) if so, by when funds are likely to be released for starting rural telephone products in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) The Government has planned to provide telecom facility in all the remaining uncovered villages as per the terms and conditions finalised by office of the Administrator Universal Service Obligation (USO) Fund while awarding the work. All these villages are to be covered by November, 2007 as per terms and conditions of the contract.

(b) to (d) Financial support for meeting operating expenditure is extended to about 5.20 lakh Village Public Telephones (VPTS) covering 90% of the eligible Census 1991, revenue villages. More than 50% of 1,84,000 Multi Access Radio Relay (MARR) VPTs have already been replaced and receiving support from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF). The replacement of balance will also receive support from USOF.

Agreements have recently been signed for extending support for providing 46,253 Rural Community Phones (RCPs) in villages with a population more than 2000 and for providing 66,822 VPTs in 1991 Census revenue villages which are eligible and remained uncovered so far within the prescribed time period. PublicTele-Info-Centres (PTICs) and High Speed PTICS (HPTICs) and eligible Rural household Telephone lines will also receive support on finalization of Agreements. Support is also being provided to all Rural household Direct Exchange Lines (DELs) installed prior to 1.4.2002. The sums of money made available to the USOF are to be utilized for extending support to both prescribed Shared Access as well as eligible rural household lines.

The Universal Service Support Policy came into effect from 1.4.2002 and support for the activities covered under Universal Service Obligation has been extended from the 2002-03. So far an amount of Rs. 700 crore made available for providing Universal services has already been fully utilized. Additional funds are expected to be allocated during the current financial year.

**New activitial for Postal Scheme**

710. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO:
SHRI RAMAMUNI REDDYSIRIGIREDDY:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state: